

TOWN/UNIVERSITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE
COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, February 13, 2007
Audrey Beck Municipal Building
Town of Mansfield Council Chambers

Minutes

Present: T. Callahan, R. Hudd, A.J. Pappanikou, E. Paterson, W. Simpson, G. Zimmer?

Staff: M. Hart, M. Capriola, L. Hultgren, C. van Zelm, T. Veillette

1. Opportunity for Public to Address the Committee

None.

2. November 14, 2006 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Pappanikou made a motion, seconded by Mr. Callahan, to approve the minutes of December 12, 2006. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Presentation on Hunting Lodge Road Bikeway Project

Tim Veillette of the Engineering Department presented on the project. The 3,000 foot long, 8 foot wide paved trail will start at North Eagleville Road and run along the west side of Hunting Lodge Road. Design is being conducted in-house; Engineering is trying to design the trail at grade while also maintaining large existing trees. The new pathway will tie into an existing pathway along the east-side of Hunting Lodge Road via the crosswalk near Celeron Apartments. The east-side of Hunting Lodge Road is not feasible for the new section of the trail.

Plans have been distributed to homeowners abutting the proposed trail. Engineering has also informed renters along the pathway about the project. A public hearing for the project was held at Town Hall in January, 2007. Mr. Veillette met with a Daily Campus journalist whom published an article on the project.

The project will cost approximately \$450,000 if it is contracted out or \$160,000 if constructed in-house. Due to funding limitations, the Department of Public Works will most likely construct the project in-house.

The project will require easements from individual homeowners. Engineering is currently negotiating easements with approximately ten owners, several of

whom own multiple properties abutting the project. Rather than taking land via eminent domain for the project, DPW has opted to negotiate easements. DPW is attempting to accommodate reasonable requests from abutting property owners. DPW is hopeful to have negotiations for easements completed by September 1, 2007 so construction on the project can get underway.

Mr. Veillette spoke to a video filmed by students at UCONN regarding the dangerous “car v. pedestrian” traffic along Hunting Lodge Road. The film was viewed by the Traffic Authority, which subsequently moved the pathway project to a higher priority on the Town’s project list.

Mr. Callahan noted that UCONN students can add visibility to this project, which may help to speed up negotiations with homeowners. He further mentioned that the Hunting Lodge Road pathway project is a top priority for President Austin and the University. The University will be glad to assist in the project. The University would like to see the project started much sooner than September and would appreciate efforts of the Town to speed up the project timeline. Mr. Callahan would also like for the Town to hold a second public hearing regarding the project.

Mayor Paterson stated that the Town’s resources are limited, which is why the project will be conducted in-house. Mayor Paterson is amenable to holding a second public hearing. Town Manager Hart stated that he and Mr. Hultgren could explore the possibility of holding a second public hearing for the project.

Mr. Pappanikou inquired as to why the west-side of Hunting Lodge Road was more feasible for the project. Mr. Veillette stated that construction along the east-side of Hunting Lodge Road would have a significant negative impact on wetlands in the area. Additionally, one owner-occupied home would have been lost to the construction of the pathway. Along the west-side of Hunting Lodge Road, no owner-occupied homes will be lost to the project.

4. Pedestrian Safety on Local Roads

Mr. Hart and Mr. Hultgren attended meetings at UCONN regarding this issue. The Town wants to work collaboratively with the State regarding improvements on State roads in Mansfield. The University has outlined immediate and long-term priorities such as signage and lighting improvements. The Town would like to make improvements that benefit the entire community. Mr. Hultgren stated that the Town will assist in improving crosswalks.

Mayor Paterson asked if CL & P has been contacted regarding lighting improvements. Mr. Hart stated the Town will need to contact CL & P for

lighting issues on Town roads. Mr. Hultgren stated that on some State roads, the Town had to order lights to improve pedestrian safety.

Mr. Hudd stated that he appreciated both Mr. Hart and Mr. Hultgren's involvement with this matter. Mr. Hudd has asked the DOT to think differently about Mansfield; since UCONN is a destination spot, traffic calming measures would be acceptable in our community. Mayor Paterson concurred and stated that Mansfield's demographic is very different than most other communities in this State. Both Mr. Hudd and Mayor Paterson stated that they will continue working on outreach to the DOT Commissioner.

Mr. Callahan stated the University is reviewing pedestrian and vehicular traffic patterns along North Eagleville Road. Better signage, markings on crosswalks, improved lighting, and fewer pedestrian crossing locations are being considered.

Mr. Pappanikou inquired about the status of the traffic study at the intersection of Gampel Pavilion and the UCONN Co-op. Mr. Hudd stated that a professional traffic engineering study of that intersection is needed. Mr. Hudd stated that he will check on the status of that study.

Mr. Pappanikou stated that it is difficult to see runners at dusk and dawn along Route 195, heading towards CVS. He inquired as to whether or not the DOT has any sidewalk plans for that area. Mr. Hultgren responded that he is not aware of any planned pedestrian improvements to that area.

Mr. Zimmer? stated that adding parking spaces back to North Eagleville Road would be a bad idea for pedestrian safety.

Mayor Paterson recommended that fluorescent paint be used for crosswalks. Mr. Hudd stated that due to heavy traffic, the reflectivity in existing crosswalk paint is quickly reduced.

5. Community Water and Wastewater Systems Master Plan

Mr. Callahan stated the Plan is moving along. A draft is anticipated to be distributed by April 1, 2007 so Town and University staff can review and comment.

6. Mansfield Downtown Partnership

Mr. Hart stated that a special meeting of the Board of Directors will be held on February 14, 2007 regarding the special design district.

Mayor Paterson stated that the Town should hopefully learn about possible federal and/or state funding for the Partnership by the end of the month.

7. Center for Off-Campus Services

Mr. Hart stated that the search committee interviewed four finalists last week. He served on both the town and university interview panels. One or two of the candidates are very strong and he is confident they would perform the job well. The committee presented a recommendation for hire to the Dean of Students. Mr. Hart stated that he is excited about this program because he thinks it will help to improve neighborhood-University relationships.

Mayor Paterson stated that through her work with the National League of Cities (NLC), she has realized that Mansfield and UCONN are on the cutting edge in regards to Town-University relationships.

8. Other Business

It was discussed that the next meeting, scheduled for March 13, 2007 may need to be rescheduled due to scheduling constraints of some members of the Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria E. Capriola
Assistant to Town Manager